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## The Maine Voter vol. XVII, no. 1 (July 1969)

Maine League of Women Voters Staff

*Maine League of Women Voters*

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# The MAINE VOTER

Published by The League of Women Voters of Maine

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VOLUME XVII

JULY, 1969

Number 1

## STATE PROGRAM 1969-71

1. Evaluation of structure and functions of state government with continued study and support of measures to improve the Maine Constitution.
2. Study and support of state policies and procedures which promote long-range planning for conservation and development of environmental resources—air, water and land.
3. Support of the principle of a state income tax, both personal and corporate.

## OUTLOOK FOR WORK

### 1. STATE GOVERNMENT

Frustrated by the demise of bills embodying Maine LWV Constitution positions, and frail from patient study of the Constitution in piecemeal fashion, the Convention nevertheless voted unanimously to carry the Constitution-State Government item forward into another League biennium. League persistence and determination demands continuation of efforts to effect passage of such reforms as unicameralism, or four-year terms for Senators, reduction of House size, increase in legislative staff and office space, annual sessions, House reapportionment, and abolition of the Executive Council. Any one of these bills may crop up in an expected special session next fall or winter, when the League will again swing into action.

Direction from the Convention indicates **no new study will be initiated next year**, though this decision may be reviewed at Council, 1970.

Most Leagues have completed their survey work on **Know Your State**, and show a lively interest in publication of the results in booklet form, to be used by Leagues, students of government, new residents and the public at large.

**HELP WANTED:** seasoned writers, layout women, artists, editors, researchers, and/or not-so-seasoned state government buffs who want a hand in this brave new enterprise. Apply: Nancy Masterton, State Government Chairman.

### 2. ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES

By the addition of the words "long range planning for" and "development of," the 1969 State Convention gave direction for study and action under this item. Delegates expressed concern over the need for proper planning to balance the economic growth of Maine with the preservation of natural resources. They stressed the importance of strict legislation to safeguard against environmental pollution and the need for

further consensus in this area. With this in mind, a committee of twelve, divided into a northern and southern section, discussed how best the direction given could be accomplished.

On the water item there is evident need to broaden our present position of supporting measures to strengthen the Water Improvement Commission (now the Water and Air Environmental Improvement Commission). The committee felt that, although the criteria for National Resources could be used on the state level, it would be better League procedure if (1) we asked National's approval to do this and (2) having secured this approval, we will ask local Leagues for suggested additional criteria.

The National criteria are stated in the following position. The LWV of the United States vigorously supports:

- 1) overall, long-range planning of water resources development.
- 2) managing water resources on a river-basin or regional basis.
- 3) federal financing of water development with cost-sharing by state and local governments and private users.
- 4) improved coordination between agencies and departments.
- 5) procedures that supply information and encourage intelligent weighing of alternative plans.
- 6) citizen participation in water resource decisions.

The interest in this item demonstrated at the State Convention indicates that many members will want to take part in the local Leagues' effort to arrive at a position whereby the LWV of Maine can influence water legislation in an ever-widening scope.

(Continued on page 2)

*from the*  
**President's Desk**

## Thanks-giving in July

Thanks:

- To the 104th Legislature for the income tax.
- To the Leagues and Leaguers who worked so diligently to make the income tax a reality.
- To the Portland Area League for an excellent Convention.
- To the Mount Desert Island League for already starting work on our 1970 Council.
- To the former state Board members for having served so unselfishly and with foresight.
- To the present state Board members for their quick grasp of their assignments as well as their early assumption of unity.
- To national Board for their ever-increasing improvements in program and guidance material.
- To each who considers her LWV membership a Continuing Responsibility, who voluntarily contributes to League according to her ability of her time, energy, money and ideas. It is she who makes all that is accomplished possible.

Willabelle W. Zabel

## OUTLOOK FOR WORK

(Continued from page 1)

By now most all Maine Leagues have done some study on air pollution. It is time to start thinking about some general criteria in support of this part of our program item. By September this committee expects to have ready **AN OUTLINE AND DISCUSSION GUIDE** for use by local Leagues. It will contain a summary of current legislation on water, air and land zoning, discussion questions, some consensus questions and possible state criteria, and sources of some common, basic information in all fields. In the meantime, read, if available, the preface and proposed legislation in the back of "**Preliminary Study of the Air Resources of the State of Maine**," by co-investigators Douglas and Sproul, University of Maine, Orono.

The committee agreed that in the area of state-wide land use more study is in order. Recommended to members are three Maine Agricultural Experiment Station Bulletins, numbers 653, 654, 660 by Delogu and Gregory, available from the University of Maine. There are many questions to be discussed and answered. What about a state-wide plan? conservation versus development? state versus regional versus local zoning? In whose hand should be the power of zoning? What is the State Planning Office doing and what is its relationship with natural resources? How are natural resources managed in other states? Perhaps by next spring a few basic conceptual questions could be asked for consensus. Let's aim for that.

### 3. TAXES

See "Legislative Round-up" on page 3 for a summary of the passage of the personal and corporate income taxes. This item is not automatically dropped because of passage of the tax law. The League will maintain interest and be alert to any effort to weaken or rescind the income tax as passed.

## STATE CONVENTION HIGHLIGHTS

Sixty-six delegates from local Leagues, the thirteen members of state Board, and nine observers participated in the forty-first Convention of the League of Women Voters of Maine on May 13 and 14. Our gracious and efficient hostess was the Portland Area League.

The major business of Convention was the adoption of state Program for '69-'71. A well-presented case by the Orono League for consideration of a non-recommended item on state services for emotionally disturbed youth added excitement to Program deliberation. Although the item was granted consideration, it did not win final approval. Despite a great deal of sympathy for the problems of emotionally disturbed youth, delegates were reluctant to drop any of the items that had been on our agenda and unwilling to add to the work load with the addition of a new study. Perhaps Convention would have acted otherwise if it had realized the 104th Legislature would, within two months after Convention, pass a personal and corporate income tax and, in effect, remove it from our agenda as an active item. But, in May, not even the Legislature knew it would be so bold!

The exacting wording of an environmental resources item provided interesting debate and some complicated parliamentary maneuvering before a wording emphasizing comprehensive planning won acceptance.

The news of a membership increase of 72 between March, 1968 and March, 1969 was a pleasure to hear. The new membership figure of 684 is, in looking back over annual reports of the past six years, the highest recorded during that period.

Mrs. William Christopherson, 1st vice-president of the League of Women Voters of the U. S., was our banquet speaker and reported to us on the progress of the 50th Anniversary Drive. She pointed out that the membership solicitation had not yet reached its goal and it is hoped that some members will find it possible to increase their contribution commitment. She urged an all-out effort in the community drive.

A well-rehearsed reading by the Portland League players of sections of a suffrage play by Maud Wood Park added a light touch to Convention proceedings—a most welcome relief from our serious deliberations.

Convention evaluation reports made many constructive suggestions for changes in the format of future conventions. Some would require a rearrangement of time, others of emphases. All will receive serious consideration by state Board as it continues to review League procedures as a whole and begins to look ahead to Convention '71.

### THE MAINE VOTER

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## LEGISLATIVE ROUND-UP

### Mission Accomplished—Income Tax Passed

Our long-standing state item for the income tax, personal and corporate, is the law and we are still rubbing our eyes to believe it. Six years ago we stood almost alone in promoting this unpopular cause. Though some saw the League as perpetrators of a devilish scheme, we steadfastly presented our case for taxes based on the principle of ability to pay.

The *Maine Times* has characterized the League's campaign as "polite" in contrast to a taxpayers' group which took a more militant approach. We are grateful to others who spoke out vigorously for equitable taxation but our image was not tarnished by remaining on the side of reason and courtesy. Neither our work, nor that of others, however, would have been enough if any other tax proposals had been acceptable to the divided Legislature in a year of revenue crisis.

For the first time, a governor asked for personal and corporate income taxes, but his proposal for 25% of the individual federal tax caused such an outcry that any such levy seemed doomed. His request for 5% on corporate incomes had a better reception and was upheld by some industry spokesmen as preferable to another increase in the sales tax which would raise cost of production.

The percentage-of-federal formula was not wholly to our liking, nor did we think the high rate was wise, but we supported the bill in principle. When our own bill for a tax with a graduated rate was heard we asked that it be amended to include a corporate tax and that it carry an emergency label. We also stressed that the original rates could be adjusted to fit budget needs. When reported out of committee (composed of 6 Republicans and 4 Democrats) the count was 5 to 5—a gain from previous years when the verdict had been "ought not to pass."

After the Legislature chose to consider the funding of the two parts of the budget separately, the current services portion was met by a one-half percent raise in the sales tax, by lifting the exemption of that tax from the auto trade-in allowance, and a two-cent increase on cigarettes.

And then the real battle began. Voices for economy slashed away at the supplemental budget until nearly one-half of the 84 million was cut out. Parties split, harsh words were heard and every week a new tax package emerged only to be defeated. The part II budget was at death's door leaving unmet funds for the university, higher school subsidies and a raise in pay for state employees.

In a last bedside effort the leadership of both parties rolled out a new cure. First, a little amputation on the patient would lessen the cost of medicine: the month-old auto trade-in pill would be withdrawn and a prescription for a new wonder drug—income taxes—would be tried. The sweetened flavor of the graduated personal tax consisted of raising exemptions from \$600 to \$1000, although this dosage would be applied to a lower income level than in the League's bill. The corporate tax bite was eased to 4%.

What happened in the sickroom is now history. Tremendous credit goes to the leadership of both parties for diagnosing the illness correctly, compounding a palatable remedy and pulling both surgical teams together for the resuscitation of the patient. The supplemental budget, though weakened, is alive and Maine has a fair combination income tax as a basis for sound state financing.

### ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES

Under the prodding of Governor Curtis, the 104th Legislature showed its concern with conservation by enacting a

number of laws to give more protection to Maine's natural resources.

**Passed:** a \$50 million bond issue, subject to referendum approval in November, for the state and federal share of municipal treatment plant construction for pollution abatement. The federal portion would be reimbursed when funds are made available, but these grants are in jeopardy under President Nixon's low budget figure for this purpose. The National League has issued a **Call for Action** to support a \$1 billion appropriation to meet the authorization figure for 1970 in place of the \$214 million in the budget. Members are urged to write the House and Senate Public Works sub-committee on Appropriations, their Congressmen, the President and the Secretary of the Interior.

**Passed:** several measures to strengthen the Water and Air Environmental Improvement Commission. Power was given to establish air quality standards within regions the commission will designate. Funds were appropriated for six additional staff members in the next year to be followed by three more the year following. The commission was also authorized to set criteria for bacterial count in classified waters and radio-active elements in fresh water bodies.

**Passed:** a bill to prohibit oil discharge in inland waters and "marginal seas" of the state. If spillage occurs, the polluter is responsible for removing it. If not removed, the state will bill the violator for clean-up work undertaken by the state.

**Killed:** a bill to extend to inland areas the jurisdiction of the Wetlands Control Board. Apparently it was felt that lack of staff to enforce restrictions made it impractical.

**Killed:** through the cutback in the supplemental budget was a provision giving the assistant attorney general funds to enforce the regulations of the WAEIC.

**Passed:** two other bills of interest to Laeguers. One is to regulate the use of wildlands in unorganized territories through planning, zoning and subdivision control. The other is a measure to tax wildlands on the basis of use, to enable owners of woodland who might be forced to sell because of high property taxes to retain their holdings.

### II HUMAN RESOURCES

**Passed:** a bill to create a State Housing Authority for coordinating housing needs, sponsoring federal housing projects and purchasing up to \$20 million in mortgages.

**Killed:** a law for a Commission on Human Rights. Opposition stated that Maine had no need for a body to hear complaints of discrimination.

### STATE GOVERNMENT-CONSTITUTION

**Passed:** a bill to increase compensation of legislators to \$2,500 biennially. Passed by both houses.

**Killed:** a bill to reapportion the House. An amended version failed also. The League opposed this bill because of questionable constitutionality, and because it failed to measure up to other League criteria.

### BILLS THAT FIZZLED

1) Annual sessions of the Legislature. Passed in Senate, failed in House. Conference Committee was called, but came to no agreement.

2) Four-year terms for Senators. Failed in House, passed in Senate.

3) Reducing the size of the House to 96. Failed in the House, and passed in the Senate.

4) Abolition of the Executive Council. There was some

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## MEET THE STATE BOARD

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## LEGISLATIVE ROUND-UP

(Continued from page 3)

interest in another bill which would have changed the Executive to a 19-member bi-partisan Legislative Council which would meet when the Legislature adjourned, but this bill failed to attract enough votes to put it through as a Constitutional amendment.

## PRESIDENT ISSUES STATEMENT

Mrs. Zabel, President of the Maine League of Women Voters, issued the following statement in announcing that the State League had sent letters of appreciation to legislators voting for enactment of the personal and corporate income tax.

The League of Women Voters of Maine is deeply pleased and gratified at the fiscal foresight and political courage of the 104th Legislature in passing a personal and corporate income tax. . . We appreciate the fact that the decision was not an easy one. The League wrestled with the problem for almost four years before it arrived at "its moment of truth" in December, 1962 and agreed to support the principle of a personal and corporate income tax. At that time we urged the income tax as the best alternative, rather than as a last resort. . . . Among our reasons for support was the fact that an income tax responds more sensitively to inflation than any other tax and the need to raise rates are minimized. Another reason was to grant some relief from the property tax by more state assistance to municipalities.

The fact that the Legislature postponed the decision until the last possible moment, however, does not detract from the soundness of the measure or the courage of its supporters in accomplishing its passage. The League is fully aware, however, that passage does not assure the millennium and that renewed efforts must be made to assure that proceeds from the new tax are used wisely and well.

## LOCAL LEAGUE SPOTLIGHT

Although more than half of Maine's Leagues are located along the Atlantic coastal waters, these members are not alone in following League efforts to encourage study and strengthening of anti-pollution measures. Because we believe all members follow with interest any League's work in this area, we are presenting a capsule version of Portland Area League's efforts recently in the re-zoning of Long Island to allow for crude oil storage.

Portland League sought and received approval from National to act on the re-zoning issue under the umbrella of our National wording. Fast action was needed because the Portland Planning Board was holding immediate hearings to recommend or not a petition to re-zone by King Resources. The League urged the Planning Board to delay re-zoning until more could be learned about such operations. Mrs. Angelo Lacognata listed matters of League concern: lack of laws fixing liability for oil spills, and of equipment to contain and clean up spills; lack of information which would allow the council to predict the (aesthetic and economic) consequences of opening the door to the oil industry; and lack of time to allow citizens of the region to participate in the decision-making process. She stated that the King proposal for an oil tank farm on the island presents a polarization of interests which can only be resolved by a careful, unhasty weighing of alternatives by citizens of the region.

Although the Planning Board recommended for rezoning, the prompt action of Portland League provided them an official voice in the proceedings. The League testimony demonstrated our concern with vital issues, and we gained valuable experience and knowledge.